THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The 5 per cent cut in the Central Plan Expenditure (excluding externally aided projects) is expected to lead to a saving of about Rs. 1800 crores. The overall saving is just 0.16 per cent of GDP at market prices in 1995–96. At the current level of GDP the proportion would be even lower.

(c) In the Union Budget 1997–98 and the Credit Policy announced thereafter in April-October, 1997, strong initiatives have been provided to improve investor's confidence, industry profitability and credit flow. In a meeting convened by the Prime Minister with Infrastructure sectors on 22nd July, 1997 and with other Manufacturing Industry on 14th October, 1997, issues relating to temporary slow down in some of the sectors were discussed and steps such as restoration of duty draw-back to encourage exports have already been taken. Further, with the sharp increase in availability of lendable resources with banks with phased reduction of Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), substantial lowering of interest rates and release of arrears of pay to Central Government Employees on implementation of the Recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission, the overall demand for industrial products is expected to go up.

Import of Rubber

*45. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the quantity of Natural Rubber imported during each of the last three years, country-wise;

(b) the quantity of rubber procured by STC so far and per kg. price offered to the natural rubber growers;

(c) whether there is a steep fall in the price of natural rubber in the domestic market;

(d) if so, the reasons therefore;

(e) whether the Government have received any representation from the rubber growers of Kerala in this regard; and

(f) if so, the steps taken thereon to save the rubber growers of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) The quantity of Natural Rubber imported during each of the last three years is as under:—

Year	Qty (MT)
1994–95	8094
1995–96	51644
1996–97	18057

(Source: DGCI&S. Statistics)

Country-wise details of imports of Natural Rubber are available in Foreign Trade Statistics of India Published by DGCI&S, copies of which are available in the Parliament Library.

(b) As on 17.11.97, 1193 MT of Natural Rubber has been delivered against authorisation of 9256 MT by STC. The authorisation has been at prevailing day to day market prices.

(c) and (d) Due to sluggish demand of Natural Rubber from the tyre industry & general slowness in industrial activities, the prices of Natural Rubber have been showing a declining trend in tandem with International Rubber Prices. However, the domestic prices are still higher than the International Rubber Prices.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. In order to stablise the price of Natural Rubber in the domestic market Govt. has already directed STC to intervene in the market and procure Natural Rubber on Government Account up to 10,000 MT at current prevailing prices not exceeding Rs. 42/- per kg.

[Translation]

Development of Handloom Sector

*46. SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether there are ample possibilities for the development of handloom textile industry in Maharashtra and other States;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to ascertain the possibilities of handloom development in such States; and

(c) the details of assistance proposed to be provided for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The formulation of policies and programmes for handloom development is a continuous process. The Government is presently implementing a number of programmes for the development of handioom sector and welfare of weavers. These provide support to weavers for modernising their looms, upgradation of weaving skills through training, developing of designs, provision of product input like yam and dyeing facilities and marketing of their products. Some of the schemes under which assistance is being provided to weavers are Project Package Scheme, Scheme for Export Development, Scheme for Freelance Designers, Market Development Assistance, scheme for setting up of Marketing Complexes, setting up of Handloom Development Centre & Quality Dyeing Units and assistance for organising fairs and exhibitions. In addition, welfare